

COMMON SCHOOL ASSISTANT.

A Monthly Paper, for the improvement of Common School Education.

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From the well-known character and abilities of
the Editor of this Paper, and the vital importance
of the cause it advocates, we hope that every citizen
will consider it his duty to aid in giving the
"Common School Assistant" a circulation in every
family and school in the Union.

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COMMON SCHOOL ASSISTANT:

STATISTICS.

In the present number, we offer our readers some very interesting common school statistics. This information has been obtained in the following manner:

1st. By examining the reports of Legislatures and School Superintendents.

2d. From reports of state educational conventions and societies.

3d. From long and frequent correspondence with prominent men in each of the states.

And 4th. From not a little personal examination, obtained by travelling something more than 15,000 miles.

It will be seen at once, that much labor and money have been expended in obtaining this numerous body of facts; and when the statistical report is completed, (which we trust will be in the next number,) our readers will possess that which has long been wanted, but which has never, before this, been presented by any publication.

STATISTICS AND REMARKS.

Prussia.*

Population in Prussia in 1831 was,	12,726,832
No. in the public schools at that time,	2,043,030
No. of public schools,	22,749
No. of teachers,	27,749

* See Cousin's Report.

No. of teachers' seminaries,	42
Annual cost of these seminaries,	\$62,000
Annual sum paid by government to primary schools,	\$160,000

Says Victor Cousin in his Report of the Prussian School System: "There does not exist a single human being in Prussia who does not receive an education suited to the avocations of life."

France.*

No. of communes, or school districts, in France,	38,000
No. of schools in operation,	27,000
No. of teachers' seminaries,	17

France in 1834 adopted the Prussian school system, with this exception: France does not compel the parents to send their children to school.

In the Prussian and French public schools, agriculture, political economy, and public duties are prominent subjects of study. How much more do American children require such studies! They should be introduced, at once, in all our common schools.

England.

Great Britain and Ireland have of a fit age to attend school,	6,000,000
No. in school not more than,	1,500,000

In England there is much Sunday school, parental, and social instruction.

New-York.

Population,	2,174,519
No. of children between 5 and 15 taught in the state,	537,393

No. of school districts in the state,	10,207
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Annual expenditure on these schools,	\$1,235,256 02
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Amount of the school fund be- longing to the state,	\$1,917,494 17
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Income from this fund annu- ally distributed among these schools,	110,000 00
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The schools of this state are improving. It is generally conceded, that the fund is large enough, and that the number of schools is sufficient. That which is most desirable now, is, to increase the interest which the parents feel in the education of their children. To accomplish this, much is now done

ing by voluntary societies, local and traveling agents, the press generally, and by this small cheap paper. The wages of teachers are advancing—better teachers are wanted—improved school-houses are going up, and school books of a more useful and higher character are generally desired. May every citizen feel it his privilege and duty to assist this great cause. The statistics above do not include New-York city. The public school society of that city is ably managed. According to its last returns it gives gratuitous instruction to 14,105 children, at an annual expense of upwards of \$90,000.

Massachusetts.*

Population,	610,014
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The average number of children in the city of Boston, between 4 and 16 years of age attending common and private schools is, 12,847

Amount raised by tax for the support of common schools,	\$82,000 00
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No. of towns in the state which made reports,	289
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No. of children in these towns,	166,912
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No. attending school,	146,586
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No. of teachers in the towns,	5,008
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The towns raised by tax for the support of these schools last year, \$391,594 00

By voluntary contribution,	47,593 00
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The whole amount raised during the last year for the support of common and private schools and academies, was 796,230 00

Generally speaking, the common schools in Massachusetts are well conducted and prosperous. Some of the towns are far in advance of others. Northampton has set a good example. A few towns are not disposed to tax themselves to the amount the improvement of their schools demand, and, as a whole, we do not think the schools of Massachusetts much superior to the schools of New-York. Massachusetts' intelligence is superior; but if we mistake not, this superiority arises not from their better schools; but from their large private and circulating libraries, from the great number of periodicals, foreign and domestic,

* See Government Reports, 1835.

* Statistics are taken from the last School Report.

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which they take, from their studious habits of reading and inquiry in after life, and from their more frequent oral communications.

These remarks will apply to all of the New-England states. We of New-York must increase and multiply our libraries; talk more with each other on scientific and literary subjects, and observe closer, before we can show mind as fertile, ready and intelligent as some of the intellect in New-England.

*Connecticut.**

Population,.....	297,711
The amount of the school fund,.....	\$1,919,434 00
Income of the fund during the past year,.....	87,833 80
No. of children taught between 4 and 16,.....	83,781
The income of the school fund gives yearly to every child in the state,.....	\$1 05

It is the common opinion, that the fund in Connecticut is too large—so princely as to paralyze individual effort. Doubtless this is so, and will be till the law which distributes the income of the fund is altered. As the law now is, the people are not required to raise by tax or pay a cent for the support of the schools. The usual practice is, to open the school as long as the year's income will sustain it, and then close the door till the next year's distribution shall again employ a teacher.

What is still wanting in Connecticut is this: The school law should require the people to raise by tax twice as much as they receive from the fund. Then the people, being obliged to pay something to the schools, would feel an interest in them; for regard and sympathy always go or stay with our efforts and money.

The fund of Connecticut is not too large, if the law will but require the people to appropriate a proper sum before they shall be entitled to the assistance of the state. We hope this will soon be done.

New-Hampshire.

Population,.....	269,533
No. inhabitants of a fit age to attend school,.....	64,000
Annual sum raised by tax for the support of schools,.....	\$101,000 00
Income from a literary fund,...	9,000 00

The support of schools in this state is by taxation, tax on banks and by a small fund.

Maine.

Population,.....	309,462
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* See last School Report.

Number of children attending school,.....	137,931
Annual sum raised by tax for support of schools,.....	\$160,200 00
No. of school districts supposed to be,	2,741*

Vermont.

Population,.....	280,679
No. between 4 and 18 years of age,	106,000
No. school districts,.....	2,800
No. of teachers employed,....	5,100
Annual sum paid to these teachers by the state,	\$247,803 00
Annual sum expended on these schools,.....	313,753 00

Sum paid to each school per annum,	112 07†
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The schools in Vermont are supported by yearly taxes, there being no state school fund. Of late, considerable attention has been given to common education, and the schools are supposed to be improving. A fund is now accumulating, which is to be applied whenever the income will support a free school in every district for two months in the year.

Rhode Island.

Population,.....	97,210
No. of children of a fit age to attend school,	26,000
Annual appropriation from the state treasury for the support of schools,	\$10,000 00
No. of schools in the state,....	650†

Each town has the right to tax itself twice the amount of its share of the \$10,000 from the state, for the support of the schools in the town.

Pennsylvania.

Population,	1,347,672
No. of children between 5 and 15,.....	320,000
No. that go to school,.....	150,538
No. of school districts,.....	984
No. which have accepted of the school law,	745
No. of common schools in the state,	3,349
No. of teachers,	3,394
No. of months the schools are kept open during the year,..	4
The annual appropriation of the state for the support of common schools is,.....	\$200,000 00
52 counties have voted to raise by tax,.....	340,000 00

* See U. S. Almanac.

† See Mr. Stone's address before a literary convention at Montpelier.

‡ See American Almanac.

Until lately Pennsylvania had not given much attention to common education. Eighteen months since, the state school law was much improved by many important modifications of the old one. The present superintendent shows much zeal and ability. The facts above are taken from his report of last year—an able document. From the general interest now felt on this subject, and from her improved school system, Pennsylvania has now much to expect. The lycum system is now very efficient in this state.

Ohio.

Population,	937,679
No. of children of a fit age to attend school,.....	201,000

The number in school is supposed to be,

The school system of this state has been unpopular, but is becoming much less so of late. The system is similar to that of New-York, having county, town, and district officers, and supporting the schools by a state fund, tax on real estate, and voluntary payment.

Public attention in Ohio should be turned to the condition and elevation of her common schools more than it has been. In many parts of the state, the schools are as good as we find them in New-York. Ohio, with her princely school fund, (as yet much of it unavailable,) and her individual wealth, may take the lead of her sister states in education. We trust she will set good example in this great cause. A closer supervision, with fuller and more accurate reports, is very much wanted. Cincinnati has done nobly. There are in that city 14 school-houses, which cost \$10,000 each. These are model schools for any part of the Union.

New-Jersey.

Population,	320,779
No. of children,.....	84,000
No. that attend school supposed not to be over,	72,000
The state school fund,	\$242,344 18
Annually expended on the schools from the income of this fund,.....	20,000 00*

It is stated by ex governor Vroom in his message of 1835 that, "This annual appropriation is regularly made by the trustees, but they are unable to furnish any account of the mode in which it is expended, or to ascertain whether it is productive of any practical benefit." Common school education in New-Jersey demands efforts, at present, something like the following:

* See Governor Vroom's message of 1835. Nothing since has been done.

1st. Let a suitable man be employed by the state to visit every district, for the purpose of learning the actual condition of the schools—the number of children sent to school—the number which do not attend—the condition of the school-houses—the kind of books used—the progress which the children make in their school studies—the feelings of the parents on education—what efforts they are willing to co-operate with, &c.

2d. Let this agent make a full report of these facts, and of all his observations, to the legislature.

3d. Let the legislature (being in possession of this full and accurate information and the wants of the people) digest a wise, acceptable school system, and immediately adopt measures to carry it into general operation. This is what we think should be done in New-Jersey.

(5) For the want of space we must suspend these statistics and remarks till the next number is made up, when this difficult but important subject shall be resumed again. We promise our readers to carry this through all the states.

From our agent in Columbia county.

South Argyle, June 22d, 1837.

DEAR SIR.—Owing to circumstances, I have been obliged unavoidably to delay writing this letter until the present; I hope, however, it is not yet too late. With regard to my late mission, I can truly say, that never was I more thoroughly impressed with the importance of efforts being made to awaken public attention to common schools, than when travelling through Columbia county. The schools here, are, I think, in a worse condition than in many of the other counties in the state. The people generally, take but very little interest in their welfare. They have school-houses, and schools kept in most of them, it is true; but such school-houses!! With a very few exceptions, the school-houses which I saw are as unfit for the purposes for which they were intended, as a barn would be for a church. There is no attention paid either to comfort or convenience, or health. On the subject of building school-houses, the people of this county, and of other counties, exhibit a great want of information, together with a most culpable penitence. Of the teachers I have very little to say. As a class they are unqualified for their station; but they are just such an article as the people are willing to purchase; therefore, I think they have no cause of complaint; and I would advise them in the first place, to remove the beam out of their own eyes, by raising the wages of teachers, before they talk of the mote in the eyes of their instructors. Then, and not till then, will they have their schools well taught.

Very little attention is paid to visiting schools, or to their internal regulation. Many can speak with accuracy of what takes place in the bar-room; but if you inquire

about the condition of their school, they will answer you with an unmeaning stare, or in such a manner as to exhibit a total ignorance of the subject. The fact is, they seldom think of visiting their schools, or of inquiring into their condition. This I believe is a universal sin of the people of this state, and like other aberrations from the path of duty, there is a penalty annexed to it; for wherever this duty is neglected, the teachers are apt to become careless and negligent, and consequently their pupils do not receive that benefit from the instructions which they otherwise would.

But notwithstanding this apathy and indifference in the majority of the people of this county on the subject of common schools, still there is a redeeming quality about it. There are many intelligent and influential citizens in this county who are awake to the subject, and who at once understand and appreciate the cause and the value of your paper. Through the influence of these individuals, I feel assured much will be done. The Useful School Books were introduced into several of the schools. They were also introduced into the academy in Hudson.

Respectfully,
D. R. CAMPBELL.

From a subscriber.

MR. J. ORVILLE TAYLOR.—Sir.—It is with much satisfaction that I have perused the first five or six numbers of your very useful and interesting paper, the Common School Assistant. I think that the subject of which it treats is certainly worth the attention of every friend of his country and of mankind. Although the education of American youth is of vast importance, yet how few seem to realize it. If you present this subject to aged fathers for consideration, they will tell you that they think it a good cause, but as for themselves, they do not take so much interest in schools since their children are grown up and are out of their reach. Thus with their good wishes they dismiss you, at the same time giving it as their opinion, that those who have families to educate will pay some attention to the subject. Call upon those whose children are receiving instruction in our common schools, and they also will, perhaps, approve of your object, and wish your efforts to be successful, but they really feel so poor, that at present they can afford you no assistance. It costs so much to support and school their children, that they almost despair of getting a living in the world these hard times. They will acknowledge that our schools are very defective; but seem to consider it rather a calamity which cannot be avoided, than the result of their own apathy and inattention to the subject. Ask them to patronize and read a publication which is calculated to improve the condition of common schools, and they will say it is, no doubt, a fine thing for children, and those who intend to make teaching their employment; but as for themselves, they cannot find time to read so much as they should like to; they think, therefore, on the whole, that it would not be best for them to take such a paper at present. Thus is this most interesting and important subject slighted, or at least lightly treated, by those who

ought to be the first to aid and encourage it. These, Mr. Editor, are the feelings, and this the interest manifested by many, whose experience ought to have taught them, that great and persevering efforts are to be made before the work will be accomplished. I am happy to say, however, that there are exceptions to the above statement, (and I hope many,) yet it is descriptive of the interest felt on the subject of education in this, and I think, many other towns in this country. I am far from wishing to say any thing that may be considered reproachful, or even disrespectful, of the people of my own town, yet I cannot but express my regret at the indifference of this people. I think, however, that could they be prevailed on to read the Common School Assistant, a favorable change might ere long be seen in our schools also. It does appear to me, that parents whose children are now receiving that impress of character, which is to attend them through life, ought to manifest a deeper interest on this subject than many do. But as many of them seem to feel very little interest or anxiety on the subject, ought not young men, who are now beginning in the world, to lend their united efforts to swell that mighty and noble river, which shall sweep into oblivion so much superstition, error, and crime, as may be met with in this free and enlightened community? Teaching the young is, in my opinion, the most ennobling employment that a young man can follow. Having, therefore, a desire to read the Common School Assistant myself, and hoping it might be of service in this vicinity, I have taken the liberty to ask my neighbors to subscribe for it. But owing to the present scarcity of money and various other circumstances, it has been with difficulty that I have obtained fifteen subscribers in this town. I send you here five dollars with the names of those who have agreed to take your paper, and will thank you to forward to each of them the second volume (together with the preceding numbers) of the Common School Assistant. The remaining five copies I shall put into the hands of those who may hereafter conclude to patronize it, or will at least make a good use of it.

Yours most respectfully,
R. BARBER.

Newark Valley, June 10th, 1837.

Patchogue, L. I. July 3, 1837.

MR. TAYLOR.—DEAR SIR—Among the many efforts recently made for the advantage and improvement of the rising generation, the publication and circulation of the Common School Assistant stands pre-eminent; and I know of none which is likely to be productive of more good; but that I view as a pioneer work, which, in order to be efficient, must be followed up by some other agents, which will act immediately on the young mind, and carry out the system which the Common School Assistant has so happily begun. I have long regretted the want of some small and cheap periodical published expressly for and adapted to the wants and capacities of the juvenile mind, and so far congenial to the youthful taste as to make it agreeable. Many of our periodicals

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have a "Children's department," containing many very valuable and praiseworthy articles, deserving the attention of the younger part of the community; but the subjects generally treated of by the editors of newspapers, are not such as are likely to attract the attention of children, or to be of much service, if read by them. There is a degree of independence in the minds of most children, that I think could be turned to good account; and if a paper was published for children, and the child was taught to consider it as being *his own*, and published for his sole benefit, that circumstance of itself would create lively interest in the young mind, which, while it fostered a love of reading, might be the means of imparting much useful knowledge and instilling and fostering the best principles. Are there not some philanthropic spirits amongst us that would be willing to devote some time and talent to so laudable an object. I think there are many amongst us who would be willing to subscribe for one or more numbers of such a work for gratuitous distribution. These are a few of my loose and disjointed thoughts on this subject—make what use of them you think proper.

Very respectfully your humble serv't.
DANIEL G. GILLETT.

NEW-YORK STATE.

Improvements in the Physical and Mental Departments of State compared.

This is emphatically a day of stocks and canals, rail-roads and real estate. Physical improvements are monopolizing the sympathy, efforts, and wealth of the nation. The privilege of travelling twenty miles the hour, is esteemed a much greater achievement, a far greater good, than to bring out and elevate the nation's mind.

With us, worth, to a great degree, means wealth, and wisdom means the art of acquiring it. We value things just in proportion as they help us "get on" in the world. A farmer once asked me this question:—"Do you believe education does any good?" After sometime spent in showing him that there is another and a greater good than wealth, he replied:—"You have not lived as long as I have. I'll tell you what it is; schoolen makes people proud and lazy—I never know'd a man what learned much, that ever got rich."

Why did that man consider wealth the supreme good? Why are all our aspirations and energies after dollars and cents? For the present, we ask legislators these questions. Is not this national greediness of self in part the natural result of your example, and of the choice of subjects which you place paramount in your legislative deliberations? Let us see what the legislators of N. York have done for the last seventeen years—how rail-roads and canals have been provided for, and then see what has been done for mental

improvement. We take our facts from the comptroller's last report.

There has been expended in the construction of the

Erie and Champlain canals, .	\$8,491,394
Oswego canal.....	565,437
Cayuga and Seneca,	236,804
Chemung,	331,693
Crooked Lake,	156,776
	9,692,136
Expended and appropriated for the Chenango canal, .	2,300,000
Genesee Valley,	2,000,000
Black River,	1,000,000
Improvement of the Erie, .	12,000,000
	17,300,000
	\$26,092,106
In addition to this the state has loaned to the Delaware & Hudson canal company,	800,000
And agreed to loan to the N. Y. and Erie rail-road, .	3,000,000
	3,800,000
Total,.....	\$30,792,106

Here it is proved that you have given in seventeen years, to rail-roads and canals, \$30,792,106.

Now the same report states that the whole sum given by the state treasury for the *last twenty-one years*, to the common schools, is only \$1,700,000.

Thus, while you have given upwards of thirty millions to improve the wealth of the state, you have given only a little over one million to improve its mind.

Which do you honor, wealth or learning? Which do you place first, physical strength, physical good, or mental and moral greatness? What lesson does this kind of legislation teach the people? Do you not see what prompted that question: "Do you think education does any good?" Is not the reason in part given why parents are willing to pay more to the man who cultivates their fields, than to the person who gives education and character to their children? Is not this ten dollars per month and "board round," but carrying out that dollar-and-cent, that grovelling, short-sighted system of legislation which gives \$20 to dig a ditch, where it gives \$1 to pour a truth or open a faculty in the immortal mind?

This subject is one which should be brought before the public mind, but for the present we can say no more—our article is already too long. In the next number, the subject will be brought again to the attention of our readers. In the mean time, we ask them to examine this matter.

TO PARENTS AND TEACHERS.

Children will be benefitted by the school in proportion as the teacher is intelligent and the school books daily read and committed, are learned and practical. After a good school-house is provided, the first thing to

be done, is to secure a good teacher; the next thing is to see that the school is well supplied with the best school-books in market. Indifference to the important subject of school-books has very frequently made the school almost useless. Parents are willing to erect an expensive school-house, employ, the year through, a qualified and therefore an expensive teacher, and at the same time pay no regard to the studies the children pursue, or the books they are expected to learn from. Books used in school should teach the practical business of life. They should teach agriculture, domestic and political economy, the first elements of mechanics, the nature and requirements of the government, duties of public officers, social virtues, &c.

The books now in use, in most schools, offer the pupils but little more than *mere words*. Such books have been so long in use, that parents and teachers seem to suppose that children are *not to obtain ideas—practical information*—during their school education. No! If the scholar can read "his verse through" without miscalling a word, he thinks he has done nobly, all that can or should be done. As to getting an idea from "his verse" the pupil seldom dreams of such a thing! especially an idea that may help him in the business of manhood!

EDUCATION should unfold, purify, and strengthen the mental and moral faculties, and qualify men for their callings in after life. Should not the farmer, then, study soils, manures, the different grasses, the variety of grains, the best methods of cultivation, the nature, different breeds and growth of cattle, sheep and swine? Should he not study domestic economy, duties of public officers, such as jurymen's duties, county clerk's, supervisor's and assessor's duties? He must fill all or some of these stations—and should not his only education prepare him for them?

But he can learn nothing of these things from the books now in general use. Every school should at once introduce the "Farmers' School Book," and other practical works.

PRONUNCIATION.

If you think the following observations on pronunciation worthy of notice, I would be glad to have them considered by the teachers of youth.

The prevalent method of teaching children to pronounce syllables separately, in a different manner from their true pronunciation in a word or collectively, is certainly not founded on sound judgment, but must have had its origin in inattention, and cannot be said to be supported by any thing better than custom. Syllables having the 4th sound of

a, or ending with *i* or *y*, having the long sound of *e* contracted, are most liable to this abuse. Example: *maternal, divide, fraternity*.

By saying *m-a ma*, (Walker's order,) *d i di*, &c. the child naturally thinks these words should be pronounced *divide, maternal, fraterni*, instead of *divide, maternal, fraterni*.

Now a moment's reflection will show any one, that this inconsistency must puzzle and retard the learner in his progress; and that if he were taught, in spelling the word, to

say *m-a ma*, instead of *ma, d i de*, a little contracted, just as pronounced in the word, he would avoid this confusion and learn to read with more facility.

Indeed, by the common method, pupils are apt to adopt a habit of pronouncing many words wrong, especially those beginning with *a* unaccented, and having no other letter in the first syllable; as *above* is apt to be pronounced *above*. And the article *a* is apt to get the long sound instead of the short in reading, though never in conversation. This arises from teachers not causing children to

say *a a*, in spelling these last mentioned words, and in pronouncing the article in reading their first lessons. I hope teachers will give this a candid consideration.

J. M.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION.

When public sentiment is agitated, truth rises. Let the *whole* national mind, with its "Press" and "Living Voice," be concentrated on any one subject, and truth will triumph. For proof, take the progress which the temperance cause has made. As soon as public attention had fixed itself upon the evils and dangers of intemperance, a great pervading change was evident to all. This popular agitation may throw up much delusive error, whose certain fate is, to sink and give place to truth.

The subject of banking at present, is much discussed—discussed by all classes—on the farm—in the shop—by the way-side, and in public halls. Who does not see the result—the inevitable result—of these inquiries? How much of that which is wrong will be detected! How rapid is our present advance to that point of light where the truth on this great subject can be seen!! Fortune is it for the human race, when an enlightened nation consents to elicit truth from the smallest political or moral question. Man is sure to gain something.

Could the people of this country, for one year, concentrate their reasoning powers upon the great question, "how shall the *whole* people be better and farther educated?" what would follow? Could education become a topic of conversation as popular and

as general as banking now is, how much might be hoped. Until this is so, or something near it, we shall never see new schools opening, or old schools improving. If the people desire freedom and enlargement of mind, the schools might soon expect this national sympathy; but as long as they prefer redeemable bills, to redeemable truth, they will talk about banks and let their children grow up uneducated. But we should like for once to hear the people discuss education with the same fervor that they now show for the true principle of banking.

Schenectady, July 8th, 1837.

Mr. J. O. TAYLOR.—Dear Sir,—Feeling an interest in the cause which you have espoused, and which is advocated through the medium of your very valuable paper, the "Common School Assistant," I send you a few brief hints on some important points which have come under my observation, while passing through this state.

First. The location of district school-houses.

I am well aware, that the attention of the public has often been called to this subject, and much has been written and said upon it, yet more may be said with propriety. Many, very many, of the houses are located as near the public highway as it is possible to get them, where both teacher and scholars are continually annoyed by the passing of carriages, and not unfrequently, by the vulgar and profane language of the passenger, which must render the school any thing but pleasing to the teacher, or profitable to parents or children. Many of them are situated in the immediate vicinity of the canals, where our youth are continually viewing scenes of vice and degradation in its most horrid form. And often have I thought, can it be possible, that parents expect their children to form habits of virtue and industry with such examples continually before them? Yet many parents are so negligent, as to continue sending their children to these nurseries of vice, rather than use the means in their power, to remove them. How important that obstructions to the usefulness of common schools be removed; and as you are engaged in this commendable enterprise, I wish you God speed.

The second thing I shall notice, is the deleterious effects of select schools upon our common schools.

It is frequently the case, that a few wealthy individuals, not satisfied with the common school, unite, and employ a teacher to instruct their children. And what are the consequences? The district school is left

in the hands of the poor, and soon becomes a school only in name. Such instances are by no means uncommon. In extenuation of their conduct, we often hear them say: "The district school was so poor it is only a waste of time to send my children there." But my friend, how did you remedy this defect? Certainly by employing a more competent teacher, at a greater compensation. Ought not parents to improve their district schools, rather than neglect, and even ruin them, in this manner? Most assuredly. Then let them employ "select" teachers for their common schools, and use such means to make them better, as they do to create a select, or better private school and the end will be attained. All might then enjoy the advantages of a good school, and education, judicious education, be diffused among all classes; and like the rights and privileges we enjoy, as a free people, it would be equal.

This appears to me one of the strongest arguments for the elevation of our common schools.

Many sectional feelings take rise from select schools, as parents teach their children that select are better than district schools, consequently they look upon those schools and scholars with contempt. They have sometimes gone so far as to assail the house with stones and brickbats, to the great annoyance of the school and the destruction of windows, furnishing as a reason, "that it was only a *district* school, and not worth minding, as no respectable people sent their children to *that* school." I should wish such instances were by no means common, but they have fallen under my observation in some of the western villages. Such schools breathe not the spirit of democracy,—they are not congenial with the spirit of our free institutions. The only efficacious remedy is the *elevation* of common schools, in which the rich and the poor enjoy equal advantages.

Such facts as these call loudly for the action of the public on this important subject.

If any of the above hints are worthy a place in your paper you will please insert them, and very much oblige,

Your obedient servant,
HIRAM C. WHITE.

A TEACHERS' SOCIETY.

We have had the pleasure of receiving, in a neat pamphlet form, the "First Annual Report of the Muskingum County Lyceum of Practical Teachers," printed at Zanesville, Ohio. This report shows that the young men of Muskingum county can do much for

the great cause of education. We hope to hear of their continued praiseworthy efforts. We make an extract from this judicious, spirited report. The officers for 1837, are, John M. Howe, president; S. R. Jones, vice-president; R. T. Sprague, recording secretary; John Townsend, treasurer.—From the 13th page, we cut the following:

"The first method for the improvement of our schools, is to form the teachers into a distinct and separate profession. Of all classes of the community, there is none, whose influence is more potent and enduring than that of the school-master. To him is committed the future destinies of a country. He moulds the dispositions of the future legislators of that country. He gives a character to the pupils, which will determine the character of the age. He inculcates doctrines which affect the individual through life, and exert an influence for weal or woe. He is a voucher for the morals and virtue of the community. Goldsmith has borne testimony to the pervading influence of the teacher. 'Of all members of society,' says he, 'I do not know of a more honorable one than the school-master, at the same time, that I do not see any less generally esteemed or whose talents are so ill rewarded.' This sentiment uttered more than fifty years ago, however degrading the reflection, is but too true at the present day."

INFANT SCHOOLS IN GREAT BRITAIN.

It is estimated that there are in England about one hundred and fifty infant schools, in Scotland about seventy, and in Ireland about fifty; each containing about one hundred pupils. This would make the whole number of pupils in these schools, 27,000. Mr. Hill, the author of a work on the national schools of Great Britain, estimates the number of children in England and Wales at 2,000,000; namely, 430,000 in the third year, and 380,000 in the seventh year; so that much remains to be done for this class of the population. They are chiefly devoted to the guardianship and training of children, rather than to mere instruction.

The admirable plan of appointing committees of examination in the parliament of Great Britain, on important topics, is the means of bringing forth the experience and opinions of some of the ablest and wisest men in the kingdom, under high sanction. The Education Report of 1834, is for this reason, a valuable treasury of facts and principles, in reference to this subject, to which we can often refer with great advantage. The recent examination of Mr. Dunn, the secretary of the British and Foreign School Society, elicited the following decisive testimony on the subject of infant schools.

"Are you at all conversant with infant schools?"

I generally visit them when I have an opportunity.

Do you find that the pupils who come to you, who have gone through an infant school education, are better adapted to receive your education than other children?

Certainly better prepared, but not to the

extent that we once hoped. We find infant school tuition is so much an amusement, that children are not willing at first, to work, or to make a serious business of their studies. The number of competent infant school teachers is also very limited. There is no society to which any one can apply for teachers: the consequence is, that masters and mistresses of infant schools have been recommended by other masters and mistresses, and sometimes from inferior motives.

But you conceive that very important instruction might be conveyed; that it is very important training that might be gone through in the infant schools?

I think that it might be; but I think that in many cases infant schools have been made mere toys, with which the public have been pleased.

As far as your experience has gone of individual cases that have come to your knowledge, do you find their minds better prepared for the reception of knowledge?

Decidedly, where they have been to good infant schools; but the infant schools really worth the name, are comparatively few. It is very easy to open an infant school, and to introduce certain amusements for the children; but it is not easy to obtain a teacher who will laboriously instruct them.

Do you speak from large experience of infant schools, or is that limited?

In a great many cases, the state of infant schools has been brought under our notice. Where we get a child from a well-regulated infant school, then it is of great advantage; but (I repeat it) the number of well-regulated infant schools is small.

Are the earliest lessons used in your school, taken from the scriptures?

They are."

The Rev. Wm. Wilson, brother of Mr. Joseph Wilson, who established one of the first infant schools in Great Britain—that at Spitalfields—was also examined before the parliamentary committee in regard to the importance of these schools. It should be observed that this gentleman, as well as Mr. Dunn, had ample opportunities for becoming a competent witness on this subject, as he resided, at the time of his examination, in a place where an infant school had been kept up for more than ten years. Mr. W.'s remarks, as will be seen, go to show that the true and original object of infant schools was not so much to impart direct instruction, as to develop and mould human character.

"How far does the instruction proceed in the infant school?

They can generally read the Testament before they leave the infant school. The instruction is, however, in general, elementary. The great object is to form the moral character of the children, and to prepare them for farther instruction in the other schools.

Does not a good deal depend upon the master?

Every thing depends on the master.

Are the boys and girls together?

They are in the same room, but they sit on different sides.

How much instruction do they receive; what are the hours of attendance?

I think they are in school about six hours. In addition to this, they sometimes take their dinner there.

Of how many does the school consist?

The school consists now of one hundred. Do the parents generally find their children benefitted?

Yes, I believe so. It is quite voluntary on their part to send their children. In fact, a penny per week on each child has lately been required of them. They would of course, have withdrawn their children if they had not valued the instruction given to them.

Since the penny has been charged, has there been any falling off in the attendance?

Not in the regular attendance, I think. Of the number on the list there has been a falling off, but I think the number in actual attendance has been as great.

There is a greater regularity of attendance?

Yes, and there is in the other schools also, where a similar charge has lately been made.

Did you receive complaints from the parents?

In two or three instances, at first, they withheld their children from the school, hoping that some alteration would be made, but they have now almost universally sent them again."

This principle, in human nature, has, of late, been denied by some of the friends of education in this country. It has been said to be an aristocratic principle—a sheer apology for neglecting the education of the mass of society, and for continuing burdens on men's shoulders which they are unable to bear. And yet we believe that the principle is confirmed by universal experience. The school under the observation of Mr. Wilson, is not the only one which has had new life and spirit infused into it by requiring its proprietors to pay more for its support. There are indeed, limits beyond which it would not be advisable to go; still, it will forever remain true, that what costs nothing is usually undervalued, as the consequence. But let us attend once more to the testimony of Mr. Wilson.

"Are you strongly impressed with the advantage of infant schools?

Indeed I have had abundant reason to be so.

Does the comparison between those who have received no previous education with the children taught in the infant school exhibit the advantage of it?

It does; when they are admitted into the national school, they begin at another grade. Their desire of knowledge, too, is increased by the pleasurable form in which the elements of it have been communicated to them in the infant school.

Are they more easy to teach?

There are some few things, perhaps, to unlearn, in going from an infant school to a national school. Our national schools are now nearly formed of those who have had previous instruction in the infant school. Before that was the case, children coming from the infant school soon rose to the first class.

Do you find that the children who are instructed in the infant schools are generally

better instructed than those who receive education at the dame's schools?

There is no doubt of it; but I think the dame schools have been improved since the introduction of the system of infant schools.

Have you found any difficulty in getting competent individuals to teach those schools?

I think the persons engaged in that office are now better instructed than they were in the first few years after the introduction of the system; but there is still much room for improvement.

Is a master or mistress at the head of it?

There is now a mistress; for the first few years there was a master and mistress.

What do you pay her?

Sixty pounds a year; forty pounds for herself, and twenty for her assistant.

Though you have a population of 4,500, you can hardly contemplate that one infant school would suffice for the population?

No; but I think it would be far better to have three infant schools, containing each one hundred children, than one with three hundred. The success of the system depends upon the personal influence of the teachers, and that cannot be extended over more than a certain number.

On the subject of religion, what do you teach the children?

They learn very much by conversation; children of so tender an age can learn very little by books. It is hardly to be expected that they should learn much of the catechism.

Are the facts of our Saviour's history made known to them by pictures?

Very much. The highest class can read. One of the gospels has been printed in very large characters for that purpose. What they read is the subject of conversation.

Pictures in the first instance, or pictures along with conversation?

Pictures along with conversation; they would convey no correct idea without.

Conversation does not precede pictures?

They go together, the picture illustrating what is to be communicated.

Do they give particular attention to teach a child of that age nothing respecting words, but to convey the ideas to him?

That is the intention.

Do you not find the manners of the children a good deal improved in your parish by infant schools?

Indeed I do, very manifestly.

Has not the establishment of infant schools rather a tendency to encourage cleanliness?

Decidedly; it is one of the proposed objects.

Besides the learning that the children acquire at those schools, do you not consider that the habits of self-command and attention which they acquire are very valuable?

Surely.

Taking the average of the laboring class in England, in the present state of society, do you not think it much more conducive to the improvement of the children, that they should spend a certain number of hours in the day at those schools, rather than under the paternal roof?

The perfection of education is by the parents; but in the present condition of society

in this country, it is much to be doubted whether, except in some extreme cases, the children of the poor ever do find education under the parental roof. The question is rather between their passing their time at the school, and their living for a considerable part of the day almost neglected in the streets. I speak from frequent observation.

It is found that the children who spend their time in infant schools generally, taking into comparison their comfort, seem to enjoy more comfort than those children who are abroad!

I should have no doubt of it; I believe it to be the case.

Supposing the time to be four years, you would think that there was an increase of happiness as well as an increase of knowledge?

Decidedly so.

What are the hours of attendance?

From nine to twelve, and two to four in the winter, and one to four in the summer.

What do they do between twelve and two?

They take their meal. I have known seventy children taking their meal in the school."—*Annals of Education.*

COMMON SCHOOL CONVENTION.

Pursuant to public notice, widely given by a committee appointed at a former county education meeting, a convention of the friends of education was held during the session of the court of common pleas and general sessions at Riverhead, (Suffolk co.) on the evening of May 30th, 1837, and was organized by the appointment of the Rev. E. Young, of Cutchogue, chairman, and O. O. Wickham, of Sag-Harbor, secretary.—The object of the convention having been briefly stated and explained by the Rev. P. Robinson, of Franklinville, it was on motion,

Resolved, That a committee of three be appointed to draft and report a constitution for the action of the convention, and that the Rev. J. Mouse, of Moriches, Thos. Helme, Esq. of Miller's Place, and O. O. Wickham be that committee.

The Rev. P. Robinson, Principal of the Franklinville Academy, by previous request of committee, then addressed the meeting, which was listened to with great interest, and was replete with sound principles on the subject of common school education, and could not fail of awakening a new interest in the mind of every auditor, in behalf of common school education. There were addresses from others on the occasion.

The committee reported a constitution for a county education society, which was unanimously adopted, and the following officers were chosen, viz:

George Miller, Esq. of Riverhead, president;

Abel Huntington, M. D. of Easthampton, L. D. Cook, of Southampton, S. S. Gardner, Esq. of Shelter Island, Joshua Fanning, M. D. of Southold, Elijah Terry, Esq. of Riverhead, Nathaniel Miller, M. D. of Brookhaven, Thos. W. Conklin, of Islip, George S. Phillips, of Smithtown, and Jarvis Rolt, of Huntington, vice-presidents.

H. D. Foster, of Riverhead, recording secretary.

O. O. Wickham, of Sag-Harbor, corresponding secretary.

Richard Swezey, of Riverhead, treasurer.

Rev. H. N. Wilson, of Southampton, Rev. J. A. Copp, of Sag Harbor, Nathaniel Tut hill, of Southold, Rev. P. Robinson, of Franklinville, Selah B. Strong, Esq. of Brookhaven, Henry Brewster, Esq. of Islip, William P. Buffet, Esq. of Smithtown, and Joel Jarvis, Esq. of Huntington, directors.

The officers of the society and the inspectors of common schools, ex-officio, constituting a board.

The following resolutions were moved and adopted:

Resolved, That the custom of permitting teachers to serve three or four months before inspecting them is contrary to the design for which inspectors are appointed.

Resolved, That the thanks of this convention be tendered to the Rev. Mr. Robinson, for his very appropriate address to us on this occasion.

Resolved, That this society approve of the series of school books recommended at the county education meeting, held at Sag-Harbor, March 22d, 1837, for a uniform series of school books for this county.

Resolved, That the doings of this meeting be published in the papers published in this county, and in the Common School Assistant.

The names of many of those present were added to the society, after which the convention adjourned.

E. YOUNG, Chairman.

O. O. WICKHAM, Secretary.

DENIEL WEBSTER.

From his speech delivered at Madison, Indiana, in reply to a complimentary address made to him on his reception at that place.

"Another of the paramount objects of government, to which I rejoice to see that you have turned your attention, is education. I speak not of college education nor of academy education, though they are of great importance; I speak of free school education—common school education.

"Among the planets in the sky of New-England, the burning lights which shed intelligence and happiness on her people, the first and most brilliant is her system of common schools. I congratulate myself that my first speech on entering public life was in their behalf. Education, to accomplish the ends of good government, should be universally diffused. Open the doors of the school-house to all the children in the land. Let no man have the excuse of poverty for not educating his own offspring. Place the means of education within his reach, and if they remain in ignorance, be it his own reproach. If one object of the expenditure of your revenue be protection against crime, you could not devise a better or cheaper means of obtaining it. Other nations spend their money in providing means for its detection and punishment, but it is for the principles of our government to provide for its never occurring. The one acts by *coercion*, the other by *prevention*. On the diffusion of education among the people rests the preservation and perpetuation of our free institutions.

COMMON SCHOOL ASSISTANT.

I apprehend no danger to our country from a foreign foe. The prospects of a war with any powerful nation, is too remote to be a matter of calculation. Besides, there is no nation on earth powerful enough to accomplish our overthrow. Our destruction, should it come at all, will be from another quarter. From the inattention of the people to the concerns of their government—from their carelessness and negligence. Make them intelligent, and they will be vigilant—give them the means of detecting the wrong, and they will apply the remedy."

SCHOOL-MASTERS.

In every age, even among the heathen, the necessity has been felt of having tutors and school-masters, in order to make any thing respectable of a nation. Since the great defect and complaint is that we have them not, surely we are not to sit and wait until they grow up of themselves. We can neither chop them out of wood, nor hew them out of stone; and God will work no mir: clea: to furnish that which we have means to provide. We must therefore apply our care and money to train up and make them. For who-e fault is it, but that of the government, who allow our young people to grow up like trees in the woods, and bestow no pains on their education? It is an inhuman wickedness for men to say, "Let things go as they may under our government—we care not what happens to our posterity." Such rulers should govern, not human beings, but dogs and swine, for they seek only their own gain and ease.—*Luther.*

EDUCATION IN AFRICA.

A society has recently been formed, entitled "The American Society for the Promotion of Education in Africa," of which Reuben D. Turner, of Virginia, is Corresponding Secretary. Its ultimate object is to extend the blessings of christian education to the benighted millions of Africa. Their first step, however, will be to encourage elementary education. It is proposed to commence with several branches of useful knowledge that are most needed, and to establish departments.—1. For agriculture. 2. For mechanics. 3. For grammar, geography and arithmetic, and commerce and navigation. Over these departments it is intended to place practical and well qualified professors; that is to say, a farmer for the first; two or more mechanics, as a shoemaker, blacksmith and hatter, for the second; and educated and scientific teachers, with a carpenter and boat builder over the third and fourth.

From Miss Martineau's "Society in America."

EDUCATION OF CHILDREN.

"The instruction furnished is not good enough for the youth of such a country, with such a destiny awaiting them as the working out the first democratic organization that the world has witnessed in practice. The information provided is both meagre and superficial. There is not even any systematic instruction given on political morals: an enormous deficiency in a republic." * * * *

"Some persons plead that there is less occasion for school instruction in the principles of politics, than for an improved

teaching of some other things; because children are instructed in politics every day of their lives by what they hear at home, and wherever they go. But they hear all too litt'e of principles. What they hear is argumentation about particular men and immediate measures. The more sure they are of learning de-aile elsewhere, the more necessary it is that they should here be exercised in those principles by which the details are to be judged and made available as knowledge. They come to school with their heads crammed with prejudices, and their memories with words, which it should be part of the work of school to reduce to truth and clearness, by substituting principles for the one, and annexing ideas to the other.

"A Sunday-school teacher asked a child, 'Who killed Abel?' 'General Jackson?' Another inquired of a scholar, 'In what state were mankind left after the fall?' 'In the state of Vermont.'

"For my own part, I delight in the American children; in those who are not overlaid with religious instruction. There are instances, as there are every where, of spoiled, pert and selfish children. Parents' hearts are pierced there, as elsewhere.—But the independence of children were a perpetual charm in my eyes. To go no deeper, it is a constant amusement to see how the speculations of young minds issue when they take their own way of thinking, and naturally say all they think. Some admirable specimens of active little minds were laid open to me at a juvenile ball at Baltimore. I could not have got at so much in a year in England. If I had at home gone in among eighty or a hundred little people, between the ages of eight and sixteen, I should have extracted little more than 'Yes, ma'am,' and 'No, ma'am.' At Baltimore, a dozen boys and girls at a time crowded round me, questioning, discussing, speculating, revealing in a way which enchanted me."

NOTICE.

Said a distinguished statesman on a memorable occasion:—"Let me make the school books of a nation, and I care not who makes the laws." Profound remark! worthy of the philosophical mind that uttered it.

The school books are the child's first books—its teachers—its companions—it's story-telling play-fellows. They incorporate with and become the form and substance of the infant mind. How vividly do they rise up, with all their distinctness and freshness, in after life! Who cannot repeat, from cover to cover, the favorite book of our younger years! How it moulds and colors our riper thoughts.

How careful, then, should we be in selecting books for children! How much experience, and philosophy, and humanity does it require to write such books! Being deeply impressed with these things, we have obtained many of the first minds in our

country to write a sett of school books for our children and youth. They will be found (to accommodate many of our friends who have requested them,) on sale by the following persons :—

Anth. F. M'Cabe, Skaneateles, Onondaga co.
Wm. B. Holmes, Herkimer, Herkimer co.
George Gifford, New-Paltz, Ulster co.
E. Gates, Troy, Rensselaer co.
Robinson, Pratt & Co. New-York.
E. D. Richardson & Co. Cooperstown, Ots.
Lucius Patterson, West-Monroe, Oswego.
Bennet & Bright, Utica, Oneida.
Elias Palmer, Ballston Spa, Saratoga.
S. Whalen, Milton, Saratoga.
C. Roscoe, Sing-Sing, Westchester.
S. Wescott, P. M. Hudson, Columbia.
Potter & Wilson, Po'keepsie, Dutchess.
James H. Vale, Geneseo, Livingston.
A. A. Lane, Bridgeport, Connecticut.
Elisha Taylor, Annapolis, Maryland.
E. Webb, Anderson C. H. South Carolina.
J. N. Boyd, Wells' Corners, Orange co.
Daniel D. Spencer, Ithaca, Tompkins.
E. Galusha, Lodi, Cattaraugus.

"First Lessons in Political Economy;" "Citizen's Manual;" "Help to Young Writers;" "Town's Spelling Book;" "Expositions of the Constitution," &c. These works have been written by learned, practical men—and written purposely too, to elevate the common schools, and thereby the people's education. They cost no more than other books, and every parent that wishes his child to derive more benefit from the suns of money he pays to teachers and to the school-houses, will wish to obtain books, which make the school studies delightful employment, and the pupils prepared for the duties of life. Parents and teachers may request the merchant or bookseller, in their place to send for our books at the "Common School Depository," Albany.—The town, county and number of the district that introduces these books should be sent to us. We wish to record those parts of the state that take right views of this important subject. Not far from 1,600 schools have already supplied themselves with some or all of these improved books. These districts now possess superior information and superior advantages, and they will take the lead of others, which do not perceive that practical "knowledge is power."

The CULTIVATOR, a monthly publication of 16 quarto pages each, conducted by J. BUEL, and devoted exclusively to agriculture and the improvement of young men, is forwarded to subscribers from the office, (No. 3 Washington-street,) at fifty cents per anuary, payable in advance.

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